

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Adha December 8, 2008

I send greetings to Muslims around the world celebrating Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice.

Eid al-Adha commemorates Abraham's devotion to God, and it reminds us of God's mercy and provision for his people. Abraham's deep faith was tested when God asked him to sacrifice his son. Although Abraham was set to faithfully obey, God provided an alternate sacrifice that spared his son. During this holiday, Muslims around the world honor Abraham's trust in God and celebrate God's love through

acts of charity and joyous feasts with family, friends, and others in their community.

Our Nation is blessed by vibrant Muslim communities. On this holiday, all Americans celebrate our religious liberty, and we remember that religious freedom belongs not to any one nation but to the world.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed holiday.

GEORGE W. BUSH

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Remarks at the United States Military Academy at West Point in West Point, New York December 9, 2008

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you, General, for your warm welcome. Thank you for inviting me here to West Point. I now know why you're so happy I'm here—[laughter]—all classes were canceled.

I had the honor of sitting next to the General and Judy during the game over the weekend. I am disappointed I could not bring the Commander in Chief's Trophy with me. However, you just get the Commander in Chief.

This is my last visit to a military academy as President, so I thought I would exercise a certain prerogative of office one last time: I hereby absolve all cadets who are on restriction for minor conduct offenses. As always, I always—I leave it to General Hagenbeck to determine what "minor" means. [Laughter]

I really am proud to be with you today. I appreciate General Mike Linnington and his wife Brenda for meeting me. It turns out Brenda was a—is a 1981 West Point graduate.

I appreciate being here with General Pat Finnegan and Joan. Today on Air Force One, Congressman John Shimkus, 1980 West Point graduate, and Congressman Geoff Davis, 1981 West Point graduate, flew down with me. It's my honor to let them fly on the big bird. [Laughter]

There are many honors that come with the Presidency, but none higher than serving as Commander in Chief in the greatest Armed Forces on Earth. Every one of you is a volunteer. You came to this academy in a time of war, knowing all the risks that come with military service. I want to thank you for making the noble and selfless decision to serve our country. And I will always be grateful to the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States military.

As West Point cadets, you're part of a generation that has witnessed extraordinary change in the world. Two decades ago, the cold war was nearing its end, and the Soviet Union was about to collapse. You were

just beginning your lives. About the same time, another threat was quietly gathering. In hidden corners of the world, violent religious extremists were plotting ways to advance their radical aims and their grim ideology. We saw the results in a series of horrifying blows: the truck bombing of the World Trade Center, the attack of Khobar Towers, the bombing of our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the strike on the *USS Cole*.

For many years, America treated these attacks as isolated incidents and responded with limited measures. And then came September the 11th, 2001. In the space of a single morning, we realized that we were facing a worldwide movement of fanatics pledged to our destruction. We saw that conditions of repression and despair on the other side of the world could bring suffering and death to our own streets.

As a result, America reshaped our approach to national security. Here at home, we hardened our defenses and created the Department of Homeland Security. We gave our national security professionals vital new tools, like the PATRIOT Act and the ability to monitor terrorist communications. We reorganized our intelligence community to better meet the needs of war against these terrorists, including increasing the number of intelligence officers. We deployed aggressive financial measures to freeze their assets and to cut off their money. We launched diplomatic initiatives to pressure our adversaries and attract new partners to our cause.

We also made dramatic changes to both our military strategy and our—the military itself. We resolved that we would not wait to be attacked again, and so we went on the offense against the terrorists overseas so we never had to face them here at home. We recognized that we needed strong partners at our side, so we helped strengthen the counterterrorism capabilities of our allies. We understood, as I said here at West Point in 2002, “If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have

waited too long.” So we made clear that hostile regimes sponsoring terror or pursuing weapons of mass destruction would be held to account.

We concluded that we are engaged in an ideological struggle, so we launched an effort to discredit the hateful vision of the extremists and advance the hopeful alternative of freedom. We saw the urgency of staying a step ahead of our enemies, so we transformed our military both to prevail on the battlefields of today and to meet the threats of tomorrow.

These changes will have a direct impact on your military careers. This morning I’m going to give you a report on where we stand in each of these areas and the challenges that lie ahead.

First, within weeks of September the 11th, our Armed Forces began taking the fight to the terrorists around the world, and we have not stopped. From the Horn of Africa to the islands of Southeast Asia to wherever these thugs hide, we and our allies applied the full range of military and intelligence assets to keep unrelenting pressure on Al Qaida and its affiliates. We have severely weakened the terrorists. We’ve disrupted plots to attack our homeland. We have captured or killed hundreds of Al Qaida leaders and operatives in more than two dozen countries, including the man who mastermind the 9/11 attacks, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

The terrorists continue to pose serious challenges, as the world saw in the terrible attack in Mumbai last month. Al Qaida’s top two leaders remain at large. Yet they are facing pressure so intense that the only way they can stay alive is to stay underground. The day will come, the day will come when they receive the justice they deserve.

Second, we’ve helped key partners and allies strengthen their capabilities in the fight against the terrorists. We’ve increased intelligence sharing with friends and allies around the world. We’ve provided training and support to counterterrorism partners

like the Philippines and Indonesia and Jordan and Saudi Arabia. These partners have made enormous contributions in the war on terror. For example, Indonesia has crippled the terrorist group JI. Saudi Arabia has killed or captured hundreds of Al Qaida terrorists. And in Europe, security services have broken up terrorist cells in Germany and Denmark, in Turkey and the United Kingdom.

One of the most important challenges we will face, and you will face, in the years ahead is helping our partners assert control over ungoverned spaces. This problem is most pronounced in Pakistan, where areas along the Afghanistan border are home to Taliban and to Al Qaida fighters. The Pakistani Government and people understand the threat, because they have been victims of terror themselves. They're working to enforce the law and fight terror in the border areas. And our Government is providing strong support for these efforts. And at the same time, we have made it clear to Pakistan, and to all our partners, that we will do what is necessary to protect American troops and the American people.

Third, we have made clear that governments that sponsor terror are as guilty as the terrorists and will be held to account. After 9/11, we applied the doctrine to Afghanistan. We removed the Taliban from power. We shut down training camps where Al Qaida planned the attacks on our country. We liberated more than 25 million Afghans. Now America and our 25 NATO allies and 17 partner nations are standing with the Afghan people as they defend their free society. The enemy is determined, the terrain is harsh, and the battle is difficult, but our coalition will stay in this fight. We will not let the Taliban or Al Qaida return to power. And Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists.

We also took a hard look at the danger posed by Iraq, a country that combined support for terror, the development and the use of weapons of mass destruction, vio-

lence against its own people, aggression against its neighbors, hostility to the United States, and systemic violation of United Nations resolutions. After seeing the destruction of September the 11th, we concluded that America could not afford to allow a regime with such a threatening and violent record to remain in the heart of the Middle East. So we offered Saddam Hussein a final chance to peacefully resolve the issue. And when he refused, we acted with a coalition of nations to protect our people and liberated 25 million Iraqis.

The battle in Iraq has been longer and more difficult than expected. Foreign terrorists, former regime elements, and Iraqi insurgents—often with outside support—combined to drive up violence and bring the country to the verge of chaos. So we adopted a new strategy, and rather than retreating, sent more troops into Baghdad in Iraq. And when the surge met its objective, we began to bring our troops home under a policy of return on success. Last week, Iraq approved two agreements that formalize diplomatic and economic and security ties with America and set a framework for the drawdown of American forces as the fight in Iraq nears a successful end.

Fourth, America recognized the only way to defeat the terrorists in the long run is to present an alternative to their hateful ideology. So when we overthrew the dictators in Afghanistan and Iraq, we refused to take the easy option and instill friendly strongmen in their place. Instead, we're doing the tough work of helping democratic societies emerge as examples for people all across the Middle East. We're pressing nations around the world, including our friends, to trust their people with greater freedom of speech and worship and assembly. We're advancing a broader vision of reform that includes economic prosperity and quality health care and education and vibrant civil societies and women's rights.

The results of these efforts are unfolding slowly and unevenly, but there are encouraging signs. From Iraq and Afghanistan to

Lebanon and Pakistan, voters defied the terrorists to cast their ballots in free elections. In places like Iraq's Anbar Province, people have seen what life under the Taliban looks like, and they decided they want no part of it—actually, it was life under Al Qaida looks like.

You know, mothers don't want to raise their child in a neighborhood where thugs run and where thugs brutalize people. People want to live in peace. People want to live in freedom. Muslims from Jordan and Turkey to India and Indonesia have seen their brothers and sisters massacred and recoil from the terrorists. And even within the jihadist ranks, religious scholars have begun to criticize Al Qaida and its brutal tactics. In these ideological rejections, we see the beginning of Al Qaida's ultimate demise, because in the long run, the ideology of hatred and fear cannot possibly compete with the power of hope and freedom.

Finally, we are transforming our military for a new kind of war that we're fighting now and for wars of tomorrow. This transformation was a top priority for the enterprising leader who served as my first Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. Today, because of his leadership and the leadership of Secretary Bob Gates, we have made our military better trained, better equipped, and better prepared to meet the threats facing America today and tomorrow and long in the future.

As part of our transformation effort, we are arming our troops with intelligence and weapons and training and support they need to face an enemy that wages asymmetric battle. See, this enemy hides among the civilian population, and they use terror tactics like roadside bombs to attack our forces, to demoralize local population, and to try to shake the will of the American people.

To defeat this enemy, we have equipped our troops with real-time battlefield intelligence capabilities that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago. In Iraq

and Afghanistan, troops in the field have used advanced technologies like global positioning systems to direct air strikes that take out the enemy while sparing innocent life. We've expanded America's arsenal of unmanned aerial vehicles from fewer than 170 when I took office to more than 6,000 today. We're arming Predator drones. We're using them to stay on the hunt against the terrorists who would do us harm.

We've expanded America's special operations forces. With more forces—more of these forces on the battlefield, we can respond more quickly to actionable intelligence on the terrorists who are in hiding. Over the past 8 years, we have more than doubled funding for special operators. We created the first-ever special operations command within the Marines. We have given Special Operations Command the lead role in the global war against the terrorists.

In addition to these upgrades in our counterterrorism capabilities, we have placed a new focus on counterinsurgency. The Army has published a new counterinsurgency manual written by a distinguished graduate of this academy, General David Petraeus. The central objectives of this counterinsurgency strategy are to secure the population and gain support of the people and train local forces to take the responsibility on their own.

One of the reasons we're meeting these objectives in Iraq is the ability to rapidly deploy brigade combat teams. These teams can join the battle on short notice as organized and cohesive units. With these teams in the fight, our Army is better able to carry out its counterinsurgency objectives and better equipped to defeat the enemies we'll face as the 21st century unfolds.

Our counterinsurgency strategy also stresses the importance of following up security gains with real benefits in people's daily lives. To better meet that objective, we created Provincial Reconstruction Teams or PRTs. These teams pair with

military personnel civilian experts in areas like economics and agriculture and law enforcement and education. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, these teams are helping local communities create jobs and deliver basic services and keep the terrorists from coming back. PRTs bring diplomats, aid workers, and other experts from across the government into the fight, and we must expand them in the years to come.

To better institutionalize all the changes we've made in recent years, we have transformed the education and training our troops receive. We're taking the lessons we've learned in Afghanistan and Iraq and teaching them at military academies and training centers across our country. For example, every branch of the military now receives the counterinsurgency training that was once reserved for special operations forces. Here at West Point, you've created a new Combating Terrorism Center that allows you to gain insights from the battles of today and apply them as you lead our military into the future.

In addition to making these changes to help our troops prevail in the war on terror, we've been transforming our military since early 2001 to confront other challenges that may emerge in the decades ahead. For example, we have begun the most sweeping transformation of America's global force posture since the end of World War II. We're shifting troops from cold war garrisons in Europe and Asia so they can surge more rapidly to troubled spots around the world. We've established new military commands to meet challenges unique to Africa and to support our homeland.

We've invested more than a half a trillion dollars in research and development, so we can build even more advanced capabilities to protect America from the dangers of a new century. We're making our forces more joint and interoperable, so they can cooperate seamlessly across different services and with foreign partners. And to confront an emerging threat to our economy, our defense systems, and individual citi-

zens, the Federal Government is cooperating closely with the private sector to improve security in cyberspace.

One of the most serious dangers facing our people is the threat of a rogue regime armed with ballistic missiles. In 2001, I announced withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. I did so because it constrained our ability to develop the technologies needed to defend ourselves against the threat of blackmail by rogue states. With these constraints removed, we have developed and deployed new defenses capable of protecting American cities from ballistic missile attack.

This system can now defend America against limited missile attacks from Northeast Asia. Concluded agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic to establish missile defense sites on their territories to help protect against ballistic missile attacks from the Middle East. Because we acted, America now has an initial capability to protect our people from a ballistic missile attack.

As we built new defenses against a missile attack, we also worked with Russia to make historic reductions in offensive nuclear weapons. When these reductions are complete, the total U.S. nuclear stockpile will be at its lowest level since the Eisenhower administration. These reductions are part of a new approach to strategic deterrence that relies on both nuclear and conventional strike forces, as well as strong defenses. We're investing in new technologies that will ensure the long-term safety and security and reliability and effectiveness of our nuclear deterrent. This approach sends a clear message to the world: We'll reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons while keeping America's strategic deterrent unchallenged.

With all the actions we've taken these past 8 years, we've laid a solid foundation on which future Presidents and future military leaders can build. America's military today is stronger, more agile, and better prepared to confront threats to our people than it was 8 years ago. In the years ahead,

our Nation must continue developing the capabilities to take the fight to our enemies across the world. We must stay on the offensive. We must be determined, and we must be relentless to do our duty to protect the American people from harm.

We must stand by the friends and allies who are making tough decisions and taking risks to defeat the terrorists. We must keep up the pressure on regimes that sponsor terror and pursue weapons of mass destruction. We must continue to support dissidents and reformers who are speaking out against extremism and in favor of liberty. We must continue transforming our Armed Forces so that the next generation inherits a military that is capable of keeping the American people safe and advancing the cause of peace. And above all, we must always ensure that our troops have the funds and resources they need to do their jobs and that their families receive the full support they deserve.

I have great confidence in the future because I have confidence in you all. Ulti-

mately, the security of our Nation depends on the courage of those who wear the uniform. I see that courage in all of you. I thank you for your patriotism. I thank you for your devotion to duty. May God bless you in all your endeavors. May God bless your families, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:25 a.m. in Eisenhower Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Franklin L. Hagenbeck, USA, superintendent, U.S. Military Academy at West Point, who introduced the President, and his wife Judy; Brig. Gen. Michael S. Linnington, USA, commandant, U.S. Military Academy at West Point; Brig. Gen. Patrick Finnegan, USA, dean, U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and his wife Joan; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in Zimbabwe *December 9, 2008*

As my administration has made clear, it is time for Robert Mugabe to go. Across the continent, African voices are bravely speaking out to say now is the time for him to step down. These leaders share the desire of ordinary Zimbabweans for a return to peace, democracy, and prosperity. We urge others from the region to step up and join the growing chorus of voices calling for an end to Mugabe's tyranny.

The United States will continue to work with our partners around the world to halt the violence and stem the humanitarian disaster that the Mugabe regime is inflicting on its people. We stand ready to help rebuild Zimbabwe once a legitimate government has been formed that reflects the results of the March elections.